



April 6, 2004

**OKLAHOMA BULLETIN NO. OK300-4-11****SUBJECT: LTP – Conservation Innovation Grants Interim Final Rule and Request for Proposals**

**Purpose:** To provide NRCS personnel information and outreach materials for the conservation innovation grants section of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

**Expiration Date:** September 30, 2002

**Immediate Action Required**

Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman released the interim final rule for Conservation Innovation Grants on March 22, 2004, and announced that \$15 million will be available to fund selected grant proposals. The interim final rule was published in the Federal Register on March 29, 2004, with a request for public comments. At the same time, NRCS announced the nationwide grant competition through a request for proposals (RFP) that was also published in the Federal Register and on the federal government's eGrant website ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)). Current information may be accessed at the following website:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/index.html>

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) is a voluntary program intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production. Under CIG, Environmental Quality Incentives Program funds are used to award competitive grants to non-federal governmental, non-governmental organizations, tribes, or individuals. CIG enables NRCS to work with other public and private entities to accelerate technology transfer and adoption of promising technologies and approaches to address some of the nation's most pressing natural resource concerns. CIG will benefit agricultural producers by providing more options for environmental enhancement and compliance with federal, state, and local regulations.

Some highlights of the CIG process are:

- ✓ All fiscal year 2004 grants must be submitted to the NRCS national office.
- ✓ The NRCS national office will award all grants in fiscal year 2004. Delegation of grant awards may be extended to the State Conservationist in fiscal year 2005.
- ✓ Eligible participants include non-federal governmental, non-governmental organizations, tribes, and individuals.
- ✓ For the fiscal year 2004 grant award process, 10% of the total funds have been set aside for beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers, tribes, and community based organizations representing these entities.
- ✓ Maximum NRCS contribution to a single grant will be \$1,000,000, not to exceed 50% of the total project cost.

**(MORE)**

**DIST: AO**

- ✓ Applicants must contribute matching funds equal to 50% of the total project cost of which 25% may be from in-kind contributions. Beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers, tribes, and community based organizations representing these entities may derive up to 75% of the matching funds from in-kind contributions.
- ✓ The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to implement and complete the project.

**Immediate action is required of field offices to expedite disseminating public information announcing this interim final rule and RFP.** A sample press release is available for local adaptation at:

<http://intranet.ok.nrcs.usda.gov/PGM/CIG/CIGNewsRel04.doc>

Additional information is available to NRCS personnel in order to understand the CIG, the RFP process, and respond to questions by interested parties.

- The Interim Final Rule with Request for Comments. Comments from the public on the interim final rule must be received in the NRCS National Office by May 28, 2004. The interim final rule is provided as an attachment and may be accessed at:  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/FR\\_Notice\\_CIG\\_IFR.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/FR_Notice_CIG_IFR.pdf)
- The Federal Register Notice of the Request for Proposals. Proposals must follow the format described in the RFP and received in the NRCS National Office by May 28, 2004. The RFP is provided as an attachment and can be accessed at the following web address:  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/RFP\\_2004.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/RFP_2004.pdf)

The following public information materials are available for access at the designated web links:

- Program Description  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/CIG%20ProgDes\\_3-25-04.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/CIG%20ProgDes_3-25-04.pdf)
- Fact Sheet  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/CIG\\_FS\\_3-25-04.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/CIG_FS_3-25-04.pdf)
- Key Points  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/CIG\\_KP\\_3-25-04.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/CIG_KP_3-25-04.pdf)
- Frequently Asked Questions  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/CIG\\_Q&A\\_3-25-04.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/CIG_Q&A_3-25-04.pdf)

This is TIME SENSITIVE. Interim final rule comments or proposals for funding from eligible entities must be developed in accordance with the RFP and submitted to the NRCS National Office, by 5:00 PM, EDT, May 28, 2004. District Conservationists, Tribal Resource Conservationists, and Tribal Liaisons will ensure that information is disseminated regarding this program. It is important that this information is made available to all non-federal governmental, non-governmental organizations, tribes, or individuals. If you have any questions, contact your respective Program Liaison or the Programs Staff.

*/s/ Leslie R. Conner, Acting For*

M. DARREL DOMINICK  
State Conservationist

Attachments